

Forgiveness, reconciliation and shame: Three key variables in reducing school bullying

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Bullying is

- a repetitive aggressive act (either physical or non – physical)
- the dominance of the powerful(s) over the powerless(s) who is or are not capable of retaliating
- carried out without provocation

What does past research tell us?

Four main research traditions:

- Nature and prevalence
- Family variables
- School variables
- Individual characteristics

(Sources: Ahmed, 2001; Bowers, Smith, & Binney, 1994; Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999; Rigby & Cox, 1996; Rigby, Cox, & Black, 1997; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001; Slee, 1993)

What is missing from past research?

- A restorative justice perspective
- Forgiveness and reconciliation
- Emotions (e.g., shame / guilt)
- Non-western cultural context

Hypothesis 1

Forgiveness reduces bullying behavior

Hypothesis 2

Reconciliation reduces bullying behavior

Shame and its management

SHAME ACKNOWLEDGMENT (adaptive)

- feeling shame
- taking responsibility
- making amends

SHAME DISPLACEMENT (non-adaptive)

- blaming others
- hitting out at others
- feeling retaliatory anger

Hypothesis 3

Shame acknowledgment reduces bullying

Hypothesis 4

Shame displacement triggers bullying

Mediational hypothesis

(via shame management variables)

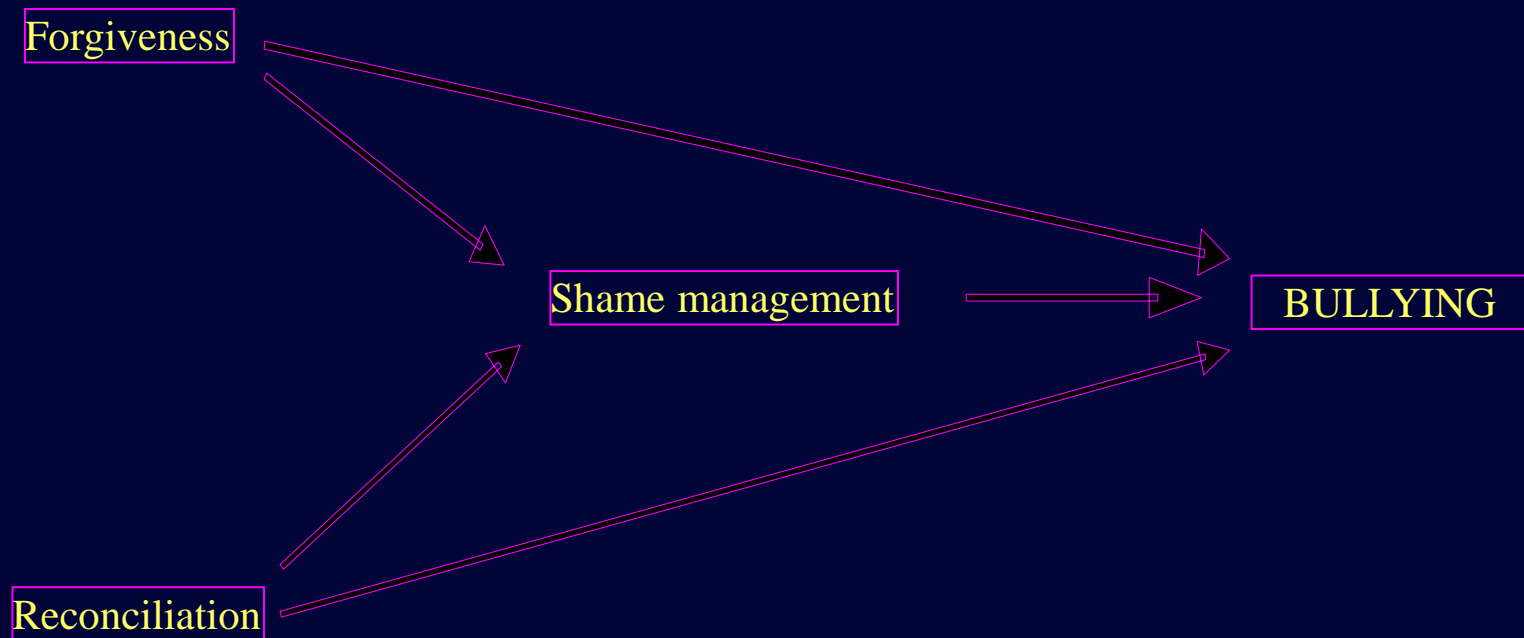


Figure 1. A hypothesized model of forgiveness, reconciliation, shame management and bullying (Model A)

An alternative Mediation hypothesis (via forgiveness and reconciliation)

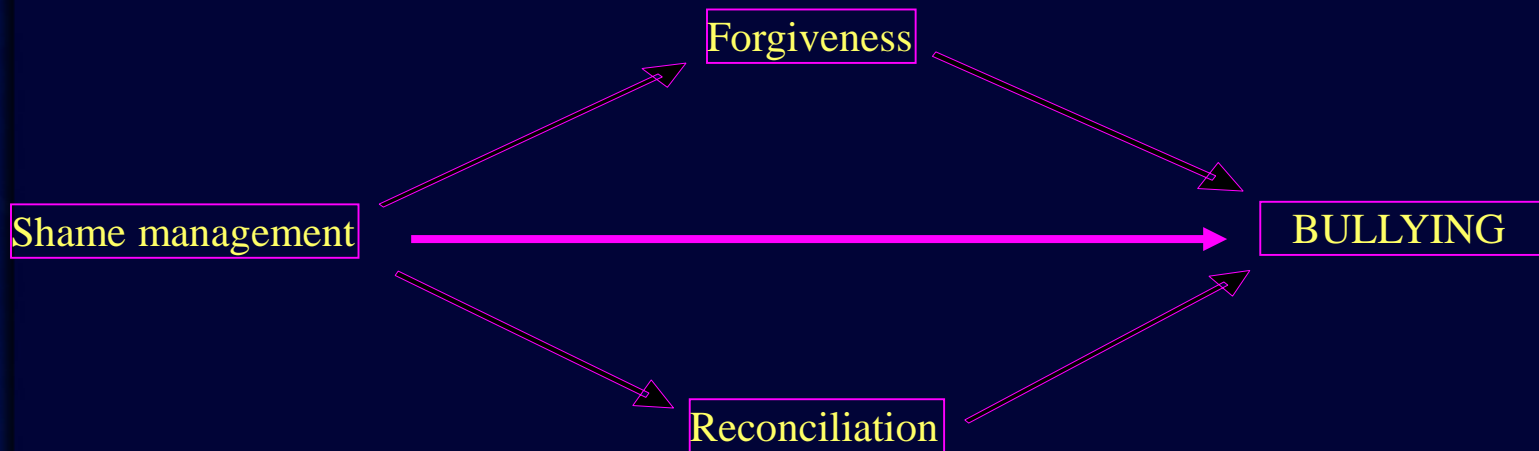


Figure 2. An alternative hypothesized model of shame management, forgiveness, reconciliation and bullying (Model B)

Methodology

- Data collected through the “Life at School Survey” (Bangladesh, South Korea, and Australia)
- 1875 students from Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Recruited from 9 co-educational schools, both public and private
- Female - 60%
- average school grade – 8.28

Table 1. Correlation coefficients between school bullying and predictor variables

Variables	Correlation coefficients
Forgiveness	-.38***
Reconciliation	-.67***
Shame acknowledgment	-.20***
Shame displacement	.27***
*** p < .001	

Figure 3. Results of a path analysis (Model A)

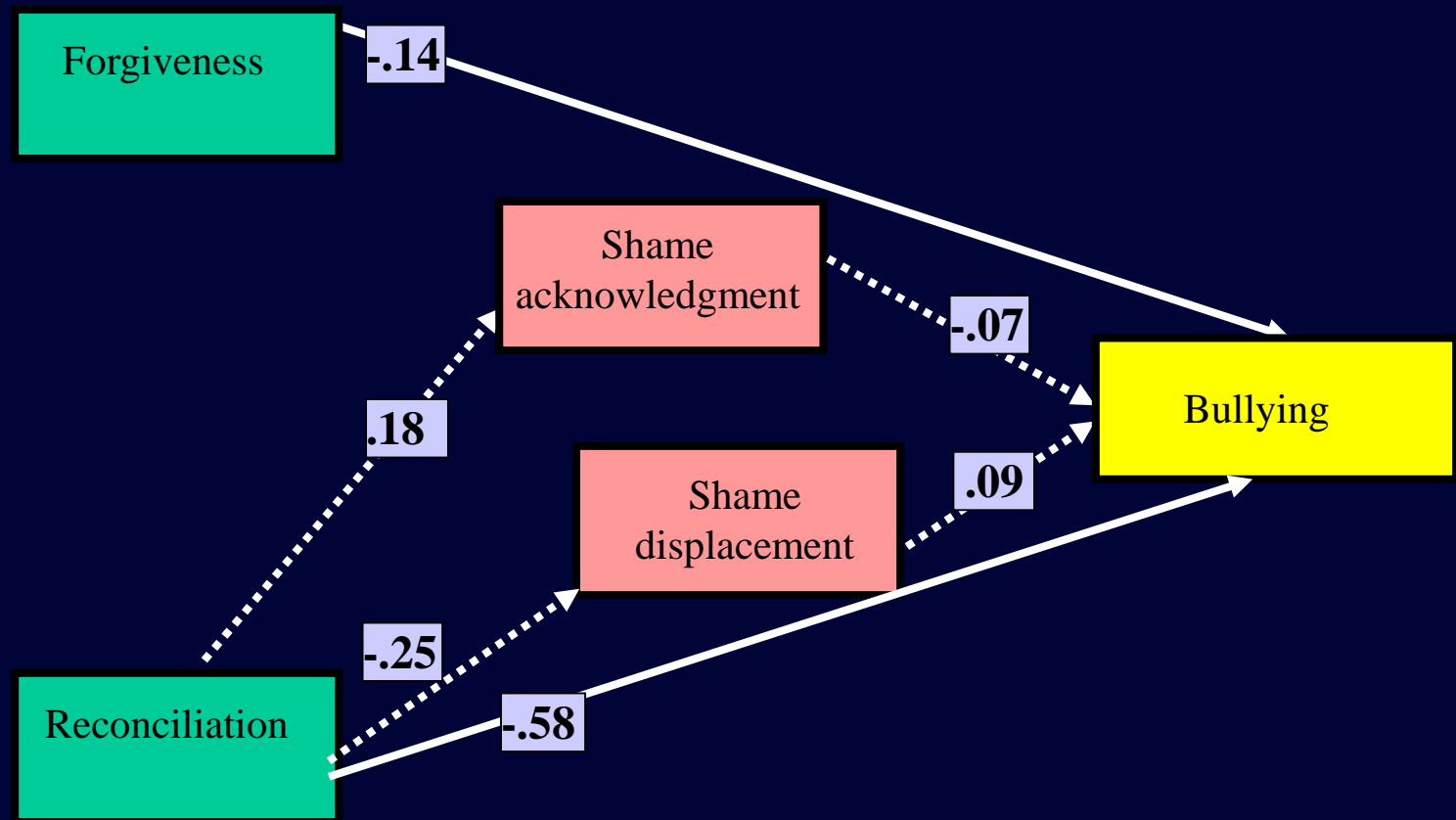


Figure 4. Results of a path analysis (Model B)

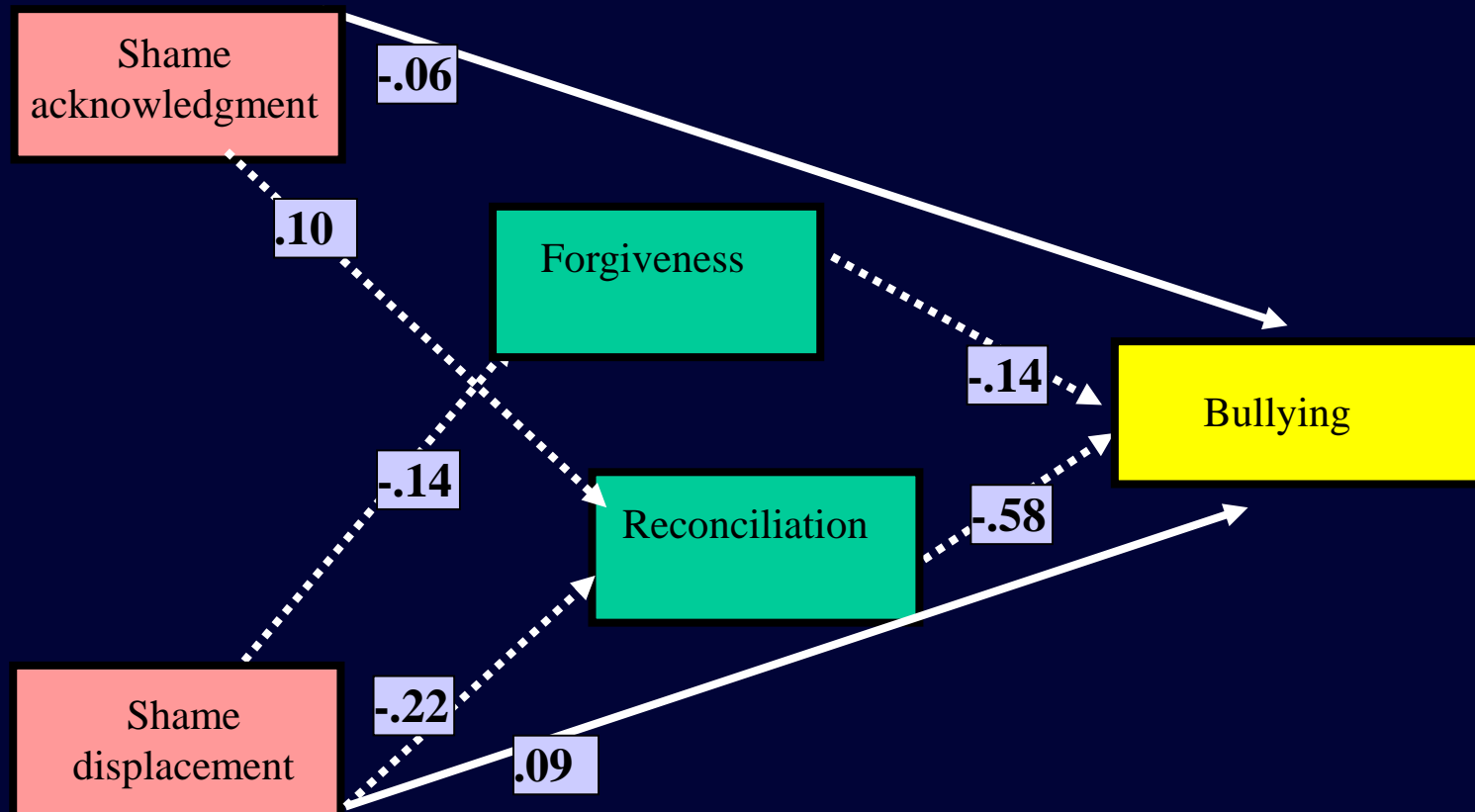


Table 2. A comparison between two path models

Goodness-of-fit indices	Model A	Model B
Chi-square (χ^2)	1.99 (df = 2; p < .37)	.14 (df = 1; p < .71)
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	.999	1.00
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	.995	.998
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	1.00	1.00
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	1.00	1.00
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	.000	.000
AIC (Akaike's Informational Criterion)	27.98	28.14
CAIC (Consistent Akaike's Informational Criterion)	106.63	112.84
ECVI (Expected Cross-Validation Index)	.02	.02

Summary of results

- Forgiveness reduces bullying
- Reconciliation reduces bullying
- Shame acknowledgment reduces bullying
- Shame displacement triggers bullying